

| EVENTS | FLEURS DE VILLES

FLOWER POWER TO THE PEOPLE – RIGHT ON!

Fleurs de Villes events brings local florists, flower growers and floral art to the public eye via luxurious floral exhibitions.

By **Kathryn McCreedy**
Photos courtesy of *Fleurs de Villes*

Some of you may have heard of *Fleurs de Villes*; some of you may have seen it; and some of you may have partaken of it. But what is *Fleurs de Villes*, and why does it matter?

Fleurs de Villes is series of "luxury floral exhibitions" for the public created by two Canadian friends – **Tina Barkley** and **Karen Marshall**. This project, which has become the latest phenomenon in the floral industry, combines Barkley and Marshall's love of flowers, local design talent and spectacular public floral displays. Its role? To put flower power on display.



Fleurs de Villes co-founders
Karen Marshall (left) and Tina Barkley.

Lifestyle and media professionals, Barkley and Marshall started *Fleurs de Villes* in Vancouver in 2016, passionate to work with local florists, designers, growers and nurseries, to provide them with an opportunity to showcase their world-class talent by creating

Created by Amie Bone Flowers, in Watford, England, for the *Fleurs de Villes* event at Covent Garden in London, this Elizabeth I mannequin was inspired by the National Portrait Gallery's "The Ditchley Portrait" by Marcus Gheeraerts.





1) Modern Luxury Weddings Chicago's mannequin, created by **HMR Designs**, a wedding and event design and décor company in Chicago, was the winner of both the "Fan Favorite" and "Florist Favorite" awards at the *Fleurs de Villes* event at 900 North Michigan Shops, a seven-level shopping destination on Chicago's tony Magnificent Mile.

2) L'Occitane's mannequin, created by Chicago's **Flowers for Dreams**, won the "Best in Show" award at the *Fleurs de Villes* event in Chicago.

3) 900 North Michigan Shops' mannequin, created by **Designs by Pavet** in Chicago, was the winner of the "Most Original" award at the Windy City event.

4) Four Seasons Hotel Chicago's mannequin was created by **The Revel Group**, a Chicago event planning and décor company, for the *Fleurs de Villes* event at 900 North Michigan Shops.

stunning displays of floral art. The goal was to present floral art in a unique way and open it to all, connecting the public with a luxurious sensory experience that they wouldn't see anywhere else – an exhibition of stunning fresh floral mannequins presented in elegant gallery-like settings.

With the floral designs often containing hundreds and even thousands of blooms and plants each, visitors experience a true feast for the senses, with surprise-and-delight pop-up activations including flower-market stalls, floral-themed cocktail bars and a range of floral workshops.

"*Fleurs de Villes* focuses on two things: flowers and cities," Marshall explains. "Our unique juxtaposition of an international luxury experiential brand with a hyper-local focus – presenting the best talent in each city, each *ville*, we pop up in – resonates worldwide."

Since its first event in 2016, *Fleurs de Villes* has arranged events all over the world, including at the Covent Garden and the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London as well as in Vancouver, Toronto and Québec City, to name but a few, bringing together more than 200 floral artists through more than 25 one-of-a-kind shows.

While originally a traveling Canadian event showcase, *Fleurs de Villes* made its first foray into the U.S. last autumn, showcasing sensational unique floral compositions from local designers from Chicago, New York City and Costa Mesa, Calif. Florists in these three cities brought their A-games, as evidenced by the photos on these pages.

how the events work

In each city that *Fleurs de Villes* pops up in, local florists are invited to create luxury floral couture, designing and dressing mannequins in nothing but fresh botanical materials. Each florist is given a mannequin and the challenging opportunity to go wild and create "beyond the bouquet," collaborating with world-class brands to showcase their creative talent and vision like never before. In addition, *Fleurs de Villes* partners with floral wholesalers and growers, such as **Mayesh Wholesale Florist**, **Kennicott Brothers** and **Rosaprima**, who help bring the floral exhibitions to life.

"When we send our invitations to create in each city, the reaction from florists is overwhelming," notes Barkley. "Many florists

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are running hectic small businesses, yet they're so excited to be presented with this opportunity to do something that really shows off their creativity and to promote their businesses to a wider audience."

The rules demand that designs must be 100 percent organic, but the floral designers are allowed to build forms beneath their fresh floral creations using whatever materials they like. The designers create intricate forms using wood, metal panels, chicken wire and more, finding ingenious ways to attach water sources so that the flowers remain fresh throughout the five-to-10-day shows.

Once the designs are complete, they are unveiled at a VIP event, affording the designers an opportunity to promote themselves and mingle with media, invited guests and fellow florists. The floral designs are judged by an esteemed panel, and awards in four categories are presented: "Best in Show," "Most Original," "Most Realistic" and "Florist Favorite." The show is then open to the public, and attendees are encouraged to vote for their favorite mannequins, with a fifth award, "Fan Favorite," announced as the finale to each show.

expanding worldwide

"We've been amazed by how quickly word has spread, and we've been inundated with requests from fans, florists and potential hosting partners from cities spanning the globe who are keen to partner with *Fleurs de Villes*' experiential brand," relates Marshall. "We're thrilled that our calendar is already full for 2020 and that we'll soon be popping up on every continent and engaging the public in new ways through fresh luxury floral installations.

In addition to shows in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver again this year, *Fleurs de Villes* will be the feature attraction at Seattle's Northwest Flower & Garden Festival in February and at the Calgary Stampede in July. *'Fleurs de Villes Femmes'* – a celebration of remarkable women – will premiere at London's Covent Garden in May, before rolling out to Manchester, South Africa, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City and other U.S. cities from July through November.

"We have had incredible response in each city and country we show in. With worldwide expansion our goal, we are delighted to be adding new cities, new countries and continents, as well as new themed shows, to our schedule in 2020," sums up Marshall. "The *Fleurs de Villes* family is growing." ■



5) Jacob Maarse Florist, in Pasadena, Calif., took inspiration from Coach's Fall/Winter 2019 collection to create this design at the *Fleurs de Villes* event at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa, Calif., using orchids, roses, *Hydrangea*, *Dahlia*, sweet-peas, thistles and black ti leaves.

6) At Hudson Yards NYC, on Manhattan's West Side, this mannequin, created by Villanueva Designs, a floral, event and garden design located in the New York City Flower District, drew from the colorful, playful looks of the 1980s New York pop scene – in particular, Cyndi Lauper.



See more online.

<https://qrs.ly/3rb148v>

For more information, visit fleursdevilles.com, and follow @fleursdevilles to discover which cities the floral showcase will be visiting in 2020 and to see the extraordinary local floral talent. Florists interested in participating in 2020 shows are invited to contact Tina Barkley, at tina@fleursdevilles.com for details.

